Outside In

Ellsworth Kelly

Matthew Marks Gallery

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Briony Fer

Where does the inside of a painting end and the outside begin? This is a question Ellsworth Kelly has been posing for over six decades. His paintings, with their clearly defined shapes and pristine flat surfaces, are sensual and direct — so much so that it is tempting to assume that we know where they stop, and where the world outside the picture begins. It is normal, after all, to understand the outer limit of a picture as the point at which its edges meet the wall. But this assumption is precisely what Kelly's work forces us to reconsider. In many different ways, keeping the inside and the outside in their proper place is rendered more rather than less baffling by the clean look of his forms.

In Kelly's hands, a razor-sharp outer edge — of a sweeping curve or a plane of intense color — becomes a much more precarious point of contact. His abstraction is anything but pure and self-contained. It bears little relation to the reductive model of ever-simpler universal forms uncontaminated by the world outside art. On the contrary, as Yve-Alain Bois has shown so persuasively, the structural logic of Kelly's model of "transfer" is utterly different from established forms of abstraction. It allows the artist to transcribe rather than compose shapes and colors he has observed already-made in the world, severed now from their original referents.[1] In the discussion that follows, I offer some additional notes on the consequences of Kelly's anti-compositional procedure, and the question of what or where the outer limit of painting might be, or even if its limits could be described as such.

First, I would like to suggest that Kelly has, from the very outset, by which I mean his earliest work in Paris from 1949 to 1950, refused the idea that painting should have a single ground. This may seem counterintuitive, given that the artist's innovative use of flat, evenly applied colors has led him to be associated with monochrome painting. Even when his paintings are made up of multiple and polychrome parts, each color surface is single and uniform. But the ground is not single and uniform, because ground, as opposed to surface alone, also suggests the material entity that a painting cuts out of space. One of Kelly's monochrome paintings, *White Plaque: Bridge Arch and Reflection* (1955) [**fig. 1**], takes as its template the negative shape of the underside of a bridge over the Seine and its upside-down reflection in water, making two only partially complete circles intersect. It is painted on wood, with a wooden strip both dividing and conjoining the two parts. Though flat, it is a relief-like object with a clearly defined thickness.

A soon as Kelly began to work in relief — which he did from the start, of course, in the famous *Window, Museum of Modern Art, Paris*



Fig. 1
White Plaque: Bridge Arch and Reflection, 1955
Oil on wood, two panels separated by a wood strip
64⅞ × 47⅞ x ½ inches; 165 × 122 x 1.3 cm
The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Fractional and promised gift of Emily Rauh Pulizter; Vincent D'Aquila and Harry Soviak Bequest Fund, and Enid A. Haupt Fund



Fig. 2
Window, Museum of Modern Art, Paris, 1949
Oil and wood on canvas, two joined panels
50½ × 19½ inches; 128 × 50 cm
Collection of the artist

(1949) [**fig. 2**] — he also made us notice the wall behind. The window motif draws our attention to this effect fairly vividly, but it is even more striking in his subsequent shaped paintings, which underscore the ambiguity of this relation. As soon as a canvas is no longer rectangular, it makes manifest what is latent in every painting: the fact that it has a thickness and is, of necessity, in a relationship *with* the wall. With his large-scale wall reliefs from the 1950s, in which shape is something not only contained *in* but containing *of* a picture, this fact becomes all the more emphatic. It is not immediately clear what is the ground — whether it is defined by the edges of the painting itself or by the wall behind it. Always pronounced, this aspect of Kelly's work would come to the fore when he began grouping monochrome shaped canvases in relation to one another as a single work, using the wall as an expanded ground. But already here, in this modest early white relief split horizontally into two conjoined parts, the ground is doubled by the wall to which the painting is fastened.[2]

Splitting and doubling of this kind recur throughout Kelly's work. If it is not exactly everywhere you look, it is frequent enough. It is very clear in some works, like the recent *Yellow Relief over Black* (2013), a deceptively simple painting made of two colors. A yellow canvas is placed both under and over the black, in so far as the yellow is the lower color but also protrudes farther out into the viewer's space, if only by a couple inches. These adjustments in very shallow depth are enough to confuse the eye, to cause a double take, to make one wonder about symmetry and relative weights of color. The direct impact of a painting like this has to do with the assertive color contrast but also depends on the mode of address it adopts, which is unambiguously frontal yet otherwise perceptually precarious.

This insistence on frontality and shallow depth has conventionally defined the relief format, both in its pre-modern and its modern iterations, and marks out something very distinctive in Kelly's work. Making paintings as relief, then, is crucial to his project for a number of reasons. The first is that relief animates the space between painting and sculpture. It allows the artist to traffic, to and fro, between two-dimensionality and three-dimensionality. Kelly has said that he sees his sculpture as something to be taken off the wall, which is not quite the same as, but is still reminiscent of, Adolf von Hildebrand's claim that relief was the origin of sculpture.[3] It means that sculpture derives from, just as it projects from, a two-dimensional background. And of course it reflects back on painting: while we can see the relatively two-dimensional and pictorial nature of Kelly's freestanding sculptures, we would also have to concede the fact that while his paintings obviously have no painterly texture, they create both physical and chromatic ambiguities in physical space. The reciprocities and point of contact turn out to be more interesting than the conventional oppositions.

Relief has also historically had a privileged relationship to architecture, articulating sections of walls, ceilings, and columns on both the insides and outsides of buildings, which is also significant for Kelly. To begin a painting with the wall is to make painting, like relief, structurally a part of — and conversant with — architecture. Quite aside from the radically different ways Kelly conceived of the already-made, the architectural component of his work — beginning with the way he incorporated walls as a structural element — was diametrically opposed to the decorative murals that Matisse was making in his hotel room in the south of France during the 1950s.[4] Colored cut-outs and the principle of collage were a common trigger. But if the cut-out led Matisse away from painting, it was to assimilate the room to a pictorial order by papering its walls. Kelly, on the other hand, used painting itself to threaten the self-enclosed or autonomous language of the picture at the very point it meets the wall.[5]

In Kelly's hands, both relief and collage conspire to lend emphasis to painting's connections outside itself. In the absence of a physical frame as a container, a framing edge — one that may or may not be rectangular or even regular — initiates a new set of coordinates. Even the term "framing edge" fails in the face of the kinds of shapes Kelly favors, which bring the outside in with audacious cuts and curves. A series of large backward *B*'s made in painted aluminum (*Blue Curves*, *Yellow Curves*, *Red Curves*, and *Black Curves*, all 2014), for example, are all identically shaped double figures that are nevertheless apprehended differently according to their color. But it is also the sheerly beautiful incision of negative space into each of them — the exquisite point where the white wall penetrates the very center of the work and partially cuts it in two — that is as much a part of the work as the color positives.

Kelly's interest in relief sculpture was formed early on during his years in France, and he has sustained it. You can see him recording his observations in his sketchbook pages: not just the walls of the Metro but also the stonework of Saint-Germain l'Auxerrois, the church next to the Louvre, or the shadow patterns of the sixteenth-century chateau at Ormesson-sur-Marne to the southeast of Paris.[6] As he moved around the city and beyond it, as he traveled through France, he drew the patchwork of old and new to which he was exposed. He collected and recorded everyday visual experience, in all its manifold variety. It was often light and shadow — flattened out, abstracted — that compelled him to play in that same interstitial space between two dimensions and three, by taking the very element that defined volume — shadow — and making it flat and opaque. Black-and-white photography would also fuel this preoccupation with "the interplay between two and three dimensions"[7] by transforming something with depth into something flat. Certainly the photographs he took at this time seem to parallel many of the aspects he found compelling in bas-relief.

In particular Kelly loved the Romanesque. For Meyer Schapiro, in his famous essay on the cathedral at Moissac in southwest France, the significance of Romanesque relief was the way it subordinated modeling to contour, where "the figures are so slight in relief they appear to be drawings rather than sculptures."[8] This created flat, frontal, incised forms that are highly schematic with simple geometric shapes sharply outlined against a wall [**fig. 3**]. Folds in drapery are rendered as simple curves "as if determined by the hollows and surfaces of an underlying body" but where "the body is not rendered."[9] A high degree of schematization corresponds to a game of hide-and-seek with the body, while never depicting it mimetically. Incidentally, Kelly's edition of twenty-four prints titled the *Romanesque Series* (1973–76),[10] each of which bears the name of a Romanesque cathedral or abbey, invokes, with the subtle use of embossing, something of those most shallow yet sensual undulations.

Relief had taken a very different turn at the beginning of the twentieth century, when collage, under the pressure of the intrusive matter that had invaded it, broke open to become a three-dimensional construction. The space of relief was no longer carved or modeled or hollowed out but protruded literally from the wall, as in Picasso's cut and folded cardboard guitars or Jean Arp's reliefs [**fig. 4**]. Relief itself was turned inside out — to be literally built *out* from the wall, rather than, as it had been historically understood, built out only in order to be carved into. Kelly's insistence on relief, not just as a historical paradigm shift but as a description of what he does, is unusual. It is not a question of making reference back to that moment in modern art history, or even to earlier historical precursors. Rather, it is a *demonstration* in the present that relief is still a viable way to activate the switch between the two-dimensional and the three-dimensional.

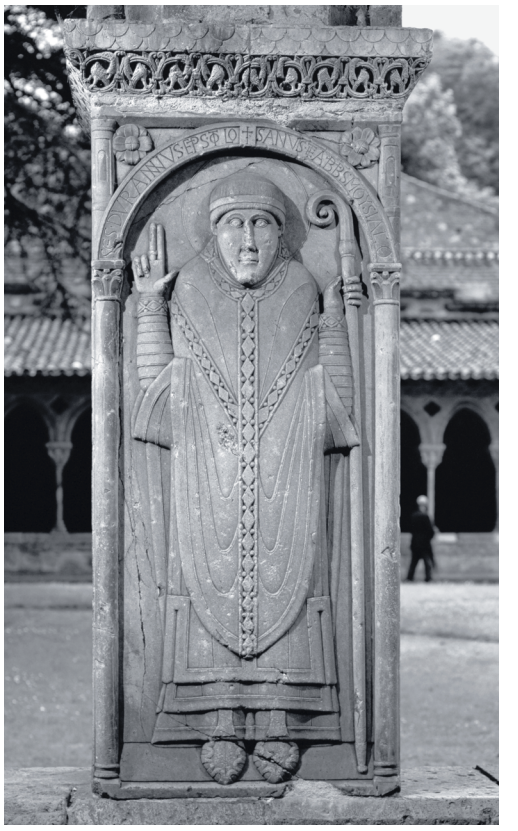


Fig. 3
Cloister pier depicting Abbot Durandus of Bredon, Bishop of Toulouse, c. 1100
St. Pierre, Moissac, France



Fig. 4
Jean (Hans) Arp
Two Heads, 1927
Oil and cord on canvas
13¾ × 10⅝ inches; 35 × 27 cm
The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Purchase



Fig. 5
Gate, 1959
Painted aluminum
67 × 63 × 17 inches; 170 × 160 × 43 cm
Walker Art Center, Minneapolis

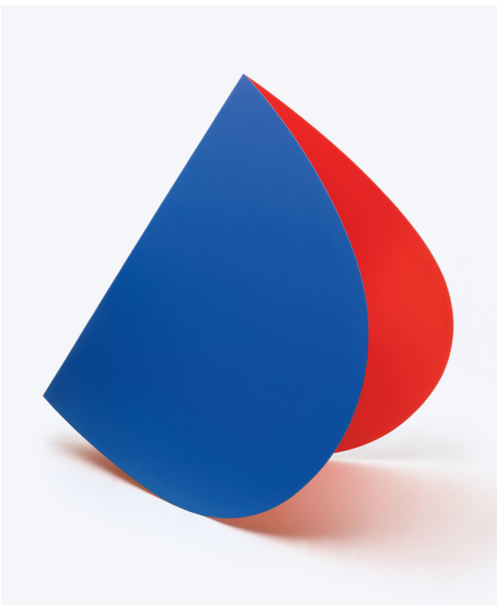


Fig. 6
Blue Red Rocker, 1963
Painted aluminum
72 × 66½ × 37½ inches; 183 × 169 × 95 cm
Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam

Kelly also shows how the space between the two can be rendered most volatile by the simplest and most understated movement. After all, a fold is one of the most basic ways a flat shape stops being flat. A fold originates in paper or cardboard, not wood or stone or metal. It either starts with an active manual action or it happens to something, like a dog-eared corner or a crushed paper cup. As much as the cutting out of fragments of a paper world, it is the fold — and the idea of the fold — that fuels the imaginary of Kelly's early ephemera and drawings brought together in his *Tablet* project, including a folded-over scrap of a Gauloises packet or a red cover of a flyer for an exhibition.[11] Subsequently, many of his relief paintings would replicate the effect of a fold, so that one part seems to lie over another part. But it is perhaps in his sculpture that Kelly has deployed the strategy of the fold most provocatively, recently treating long, narrow aluminum sheets as if they were paper and "folding" them in the middle (*Untitled*, 2013, and *Untitled*, 2014). Paradoxically, the fold turns a freestanding sculpture back on itself, to make it flat or almost flat.

The movements of these recent outdoor sculptures recall — in reverse — some of Kelly's earliest sculptures, like *Pony* (1959) and *Gate* (1959) [**fig. 5**], in which he mobilized the fold as a means to make something two-dimensional into something three-dimensional. The straight line of the fold both joins and divides the object, just as it had in *White Plaque*, but now making two symmetrical curved parts out of one and angling them to make a sculpture. In *Blue Red Rocker* (1963) [**fig. 6**], the divisions are multiplied by the fact that outside and inside (or upside and underside, if you prefer) are painted different colors. I think one of the most striking things about the sculptures Kelly made after he returned to New York in the mid-1950s is the way that he transformed his paper world into a colored metal world of sculpture. And it is not just the shapes but also the gesture of folding and being folded that belong to the habits of everyday experience — let's call it the world to hand.

The origin story for the *Rocker* sculptures, which has been told before, is revealing in this respect. Apparently Kelly and his close friend Agnes Martin were having breakfast one day in Kelly's studio, which was one floor above hers in their building on Coenties Slip in Lower Manhattan. Kelly, distractedly playing with the lid of his take-out coffee cup, folded it in two and remarked that he should make a sculpture like it. Martin agreed. The story is interesting because it confirms something that is already powerfully embedded in Kelly's way of working: the idea that an ordinary, unconscious gesture — distractedly fiddling with a lid — could make a shape by accident or chance. In this case it would end up a sculpture, but it is fully in keeping with the logic of the already-made. The point about such anecdotes, it should be remembered, is that they resonate when they touch something deeper in the work itself, rather than causally explain it.[12]

One can even see a simple fold, as it is found or made in ordinary daily life, as reminiscent of that modernist trope par excellence: the fan. Mallarmé imagined a fan folding outwards, fluttering like a bird's beating wing ("mon aile dans ta main"), and making space shiver ("voici que frissonne l'espace") in his famous poem "Autre éventail de Mademoiselle Mallarmé" (c. 1884).[13] Opening and closing like a wing span, the fan, for Mallarmé at this crucial moment in modernism's formation, seemed to act out the coming into being of language itself. Eroticized, a fan was a folded paper object that was capable of making something visible and invisible at the same time. For Mallarmé it corresponded with the discontinuities of, and gaps in, language. I am certainly not the first to suggest a Mallarméan inflection to Kelly's work. But I would like to emphasize here the way something as everyday as a fold could tap into that deeper modernist trajectory, calling our attention to the way a movement or the simplest adjustment may begin

modestly, almost without notice, and yet expand exponentially to create many different types of fluctuation in a room.

Without doubt, Kelly's most effective means to create fluctuation is through color. It seems almost absurd to have got this far without discussing it at length, except for mentioning its compounding effects. But even though color may be paramount, it is also one of the hardest and most complex aspects of Kelly's work to describe. Color and shape work in tandem. Sometimes large colored shapes are (barely) contained and cut by a rectangular shaped canvas; elsewhere color entirely defines shape, as in the monochrome shaped paintings and sculptures, including the recent *Curves*. Color can also adjust our perception of the same shape, and so manipulate its effect. Lawrence Alloway once likened Kelly's work to "heraldic insignia,"[14] which goes some way to suggest a schematic use of color as much as shape. I prefer to recall Malevich's phrase "color semaphore"[15] — an abstract language that is visual, not verbal, and which depends on different colors, shapes, and angles moving in relation to one body, appealing, from a distance, to another.

It cannot be stressed enough, of course, how far Kelly's approach to color differs from the almost febrile utopian imaginary of the historical avant-garde. Malevich used the phrase "color semaphore" to invoke a telegraphic system of communication, throwing itself into the future through color. And it is even further removed from the kinds of color theory that would be rationalized in line with technological models of modernization. In a neatly judged and telling anecdote, Kelly has recounted how, at the Sidney Janis Gallery exhibition of his *Spectrum* paintings in 1968, Josef Albers asked him what kind of color theory he had used. When Kelly replied that there was no theory in them, Albers retorted, "It looks it."[16] From his first experiments with ready-made colored pieces of paper in his early collages, it was always clear that Kelly's understanding of color was radically divergent from either the theorists of chromatic systems or the intuiters of chromatic expression.

It may be slightly wayward to see the historical beginnings of geometric abstraction retroactively through the lens of Kelly's work, but if we do so they look very far from the reductive moment or tabula rasa of their mythology. Or at least what seems most interesting by far is geometric abstraction's radical and expansive lexicon in which shape and color would, hand in hand, combine to make consistently irregular and slightly skewed versions of geometric shapes (even Malevich's squares were not exactly regular).[17] With hindsight, Malevich's notion of color semaphore was always more concerned with color's potential for perceptual disturbance. If we were really to re-describe the primal scene of abstraction in the light of Kelly's abstract vocabulary, then surely the remarkably malleable polymorphism of Arp's and Malevich's abstract motifs could feasibly be part of the same world.

At least a photograph of Kelly's studio in 1961 [**fig. 7**] would also suggest that those traditional contrasts between the geometric versus the organic are simply impossible to hold in place. And if modernism long ago gave up the utopian dream that art could hail the future, as the historical avant-gardes once believed, it does not necessarily follow that its destiny is to be cast back into its past, or that Kelly looks only backward. Given how often he returns to his own earlier work and reuses it, it is all the more striking that his work is not — I even want to say *never* — melancholic. So I'd like to end by looking at some of his recent paintings that do precisely this: that provoke us to think again about what it means to describe when a work was made, and in turn to think about painting's temporal fluctuations and discontinuities.

Some of the recent works refer back to specific collages from the early 1960s or before. Others return to patterns of shape-formation



Fig. 7
Ellsworth Kelly at his Coenties Slip studio, New York, 1961

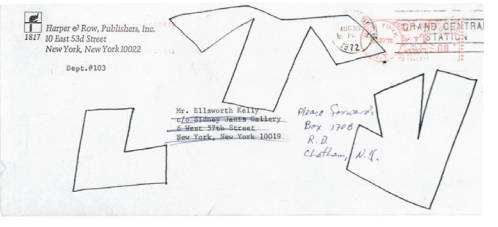


Fig. 8
Sketch from *Tablet 3*, 1973
Ink on paper
The Menil Collection, Houston. Gift of Louisa S. Sarofim in honor of James A. Elkins, Jr.

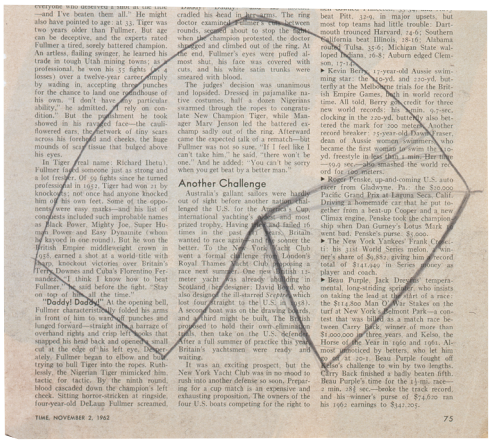


Fig. 9
Sketch from *Tablet 202*, 1962
Pencil on newspaper
The Menil Collection, Houston. Gift of Louisa S. Sarofim in honor of James A. Elkins, Jr.

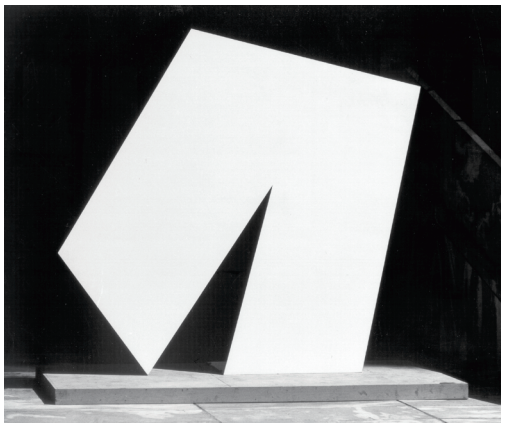


Fig. 10
White Sculpture I, 1968
Painted aluminum
100½ × 146½ × ¼ inches; 255 × 372 × .6 cm
Private collection

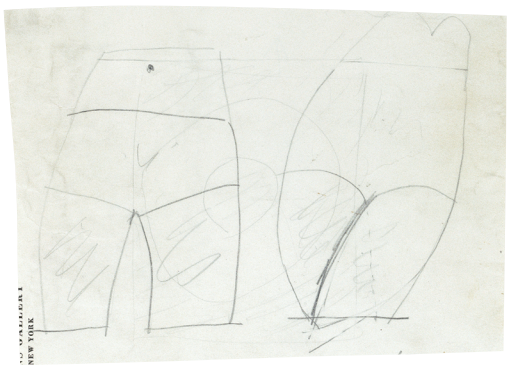


Fig. 11
Sketch from *Tablet 136*, 1950s
Pencil on paper
The Menil Collection, Houston. Gift of Louisa S. Sarofim in honor of James A. Elkins, Jr.

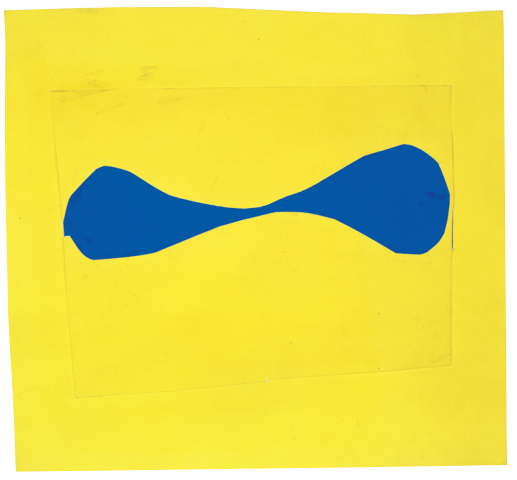


Fig. 12
Blue Form on Yellow, 1962
Collage on paper
6⅞ × 7 inches; 16 × 18 cm
Collection of the artist

that Kelly had worked on with extreme intensity for a specific period, without depending on a specific template. *Split Yellow* (2013) is an example of the latter. It has no single model, but it invokes many of his early drawings and ephemera in which similar shapes are in constant play with each other [**fig. 8**]. Shapes that begin as an arrow, for example, in one drawing are in another cut off and blunted. The metamorphic changes of one shape to another come fast and thick. One shape becomes two; another divides at the bottom but curves over on top [**fig. 9**]. And Kelly has already made several works in this vein. For example, a study from 1956 would become *White Sculpture I* (1968) [**fig. 10**]. Here the shape tilts, as if suggesting a striding movement or gait, which is carried though in the sculpture. *Split Yellow* also seems like roughly half of the great early sculpture *Gate*, which is a painted orange metal *X* that stands up against the wall. The movements between drawing, collage, painting, and sculpture are unevenly paced, at times more frenetic, at times less so, but always driving some sort of wedge — agitating the gap between the two-dimensional and three-dimensional — through the work. The ground of painting is not only doubled in relation to the wall but has also become incredibly mobile, animated by all the splitting and fracturing, refusing to be still.

Y's and *X*'s and *B*'s — these kinds of shape are not alphabetical in the conventional sense, but they are strangely familiar, caught by Kelly in an indecipherable space, often inverted or reversed, joined or divided. They morph into one another in the pages of drawings, transforming into any number of versions, both part and whole of themselves. Basic units of understanding the world combine with myriad other irregular polygons or chevron shapes, as well as only barely legible body parts: a hint of knees or thighs or buttocks. Kelly's formation of an abstract lexicon revolves obsessively around the body, fragmenting and abstracting it, fixating on it without being of it. Only rarely is it more explicit [**fig. 11**]. Rotated, *Split Yellow* could be seen to resemble any number of schematic thoughts in ink or pencil in his notebook pages, as well as other paintings and sculptures.[18] As you try to fix them, or even to still them, they become too numerous, spilling one into another. Yet each painting or sculpture he has gone on to make is different. The very process of proliferation reminds us in the end how utterly singular each work is. It may remind us of another work because it has a similar layout, but it is only itself.

Characteristically, *Split Yellow* is none of those shapes yet reminiscent of all of them, and it is harder to describe than one would think. It is both cartoon-simple, like a pair of shorts, and an odd chrome-yellow abstract shape that has no obvious name. It is not symmetrical, but very slightly wonky. Near-symmetry can be more disorienting than obvious asymmetry. It lodges a seed of doubt in us; it is hard to be sure of. In order to see that the right-hand-side angle is higher than the one on the left, you have to stand dead center — except there is no dead center, given that the right half is wider by a breath and the outer angle of the short side is very slightly lifted. We adjust to it, as it does to us. In my experience, at least, chrome yellow wins out over Homer Simpson yellow, and the sheer strangeness of the painting takes over, with that barely perceptible upward tilt making the space around it reverberate.

Split Yellow was based on a hand-drawn shape, quickly rendered on the lined page of a notebook, all seven sides irregular. Drawn in two swift strokes, the pencil lines, only roughly straight, quickly trace an outline; then the shape is drawn again using a ruler to straighten out the sides and angles but still approximating the asymmetry of the original. Which is more exact, I wonder? The conversions continue through to the scaled-up painting, which reproduces that chance element introduced by the hand. The exactitude of Kelly's process is surely

sensed rather than calculated. It seems the very precise measurements by which he constructs his paintings do not impose an order upon but adjust to the vicissitudes of vision. This can be subtle, as here, or more startlingly askew, as in *White Relief over Black* (2013), which Kelly has described as "cockeyed."[19]

A more anomalous recent painting is *Blue Relief over Yellow* (2014) in which a raised blue shape like the symbol for infinity sits on a citric lemon ground. In this instance he has mined directly — as he has consistently — that array of formal possibilities laid out in his earlier drawings and collages. The painting replicates the color and format of *Blue Form on Yellow* [**fig. 12**], also made in 1962. The odd bumps in the elongated figure eight — which contrast so markedly with Kelly's normally unfaltering and elegant curves — correlate quite precisely with the tiny glitches created by the unsteady hand-cutting of the original. The effects of chance are ever-present. We are prompted to ask, what are the terms of comparison between past and present? What degrees of difference are at stake? I began by asking where the inside of a painting ends and the outside begins. Forced by the labyrinthine turns in Kelly's work, I end by asking *when* a painting begins and ends.

Kelly's habit of returning to a past storehouse of forms after a delay of decades — whether or not a recent work has an exact double in those early notebooks — sets the cat among the art-historical pigeons. Assumptions about chronology, as well as the certainty that the meaning of a work of art is constituted at the time of its making, are all shaken. After all, these recent paintings, one would have to say, are cut out — and cut adrift — from the original time of their conception. Kelly invites us to think about a double-time of painting in which past fragments return to shape the present. I suggested earlier that Malevich's utopian color semaphore, fixed as it was so boldly on futurity, was all but lost as a historical project. But now it appears that Kelly too, precisely by mining the formation of his own abstract lexicon, has found a way, against the odds, to secure abstraction's future. By making abstract painting sensitive to its outside, he also found a way of saving it.

1 See Yve-Alain Bois on the "type of transcription, which I call a *transfer*, and which, in semiotic terms, is an *index* (like the rubbings of a tombstone, for example)," in "Kelly's Trouvailles: Findings in France," *Ellsworth Kelly: The Early Drawings 1948–1955*, (Cambridge and Winterthur: Harvard University Art Museums and Kunstmuseum Wintherthur, 1999), p. 14.

2 As Benjamin Buchloh notes eloquently, "The relief structure paradoxically points back to the painterly surface itself, rather than pointing away from it into actual space. Thus the reliefs keep a precarious balance between the planarity of painting, its immanence, and the spatiality of relief, its exteriority." *Ellsworth Kelly: Matrix* (New York: Matthew Marks Gallery, 2003), p. 11.

3 Adolf von Hildebrand, *The Problem of Form in Painting and Sculpture* (New York: G.E. Stechert & Co., 1893).

4 Kelly was not aware of Matisse's cut-outs when he was in Paris at the start of the 1950s, and was more interested in Picasso at the time. Conversation with author in Spencertown, New York, January 2015.

5 Recent architectural commissions like the Fondation Louis Vuitton in Paris, in a building designed by Frank Gehry, have only reinforced the importance of this aspect of Kelly's project.

6 See Yve-Alain Bois, *Ellsworth Kelly: The Early Drawings, 1948–55* (Cambridge and Winterthur: Harvard University Art Museums and Kunstmuseum Wintherthur, 1999), pl. 33.

7 Ellsworth Kelly, "The Shape of Seeing: Ellsworth Kelly's Photographs," *Aperture*, no. 125, fall 1991.

8 Meyer Schapiro, "The Sculpture of Moissac," *Romanesque Art: The Selected Papers of Meyer Schapiro, Volume 1* (New York: Braziller, 1993), p. 262.

9 Ibid.

10 Originally entitled the *Third Curve Series*. The prints combine lithography, intaglio, embossing, and debossing. They are named after sites such as Cluny, Souillac, Moissac, Conques, and Senanque. See Richard Axsom, *The Prints of Ellsworth Kelly: A Catalogue Raisonné* (New York: Hudson Hills, 1999).

11 Yve-Alain Bois, *Ellsworth Kelly: Tablet 1948–1973*, The Drawing Center, New York, 2002, p. 3.

12 The same could be said of the fact that, when he returned to America in 1954, Kelly was working for the US Post Office by night and making folded things in his studio by day; it is only significant because Kelly deploys envelopes as a ground for drawing and because he collects them as palpably folded things.

13 Stéphane Mallarmé, "Autre éventail de Mademoiselle Mallarmé" (Another Fan of Mademoiselle Mallarmé), c. 1884, in *Collected Poems of Stéphane Mallarmé* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996), p. 50.

14 Lawrence Alloway referred to Kelly's "heraldic insignia" in "Heraldry and Sculpture," *Arts International*, vol. 6, no. 3, April 1962, pp. 52–3.

15 Kazimir Malevich, "Non-Objective Creation and Suprematism," in Ed Troels Anderson, *Malevich: Essays on Art, volume 1* (New York: George Wittenborn, 1971), p. 20.

16 Ellsworth Kelly in conversation with the author, January 2015.

17 In his selection of paintings in the collection for his "Artist's Choice" exhibition "Ellsworth Kelly: Fragmentation and the Single Form" at the Museum of Modern Art in 1990, Kelly brought together Matisse's *The Rose Marble Table* (1917), Mondrian's *Tableau: Lozenge with Four Lines and Gray* (1926), and Malevich's *Suprematist Composition: White on White* (1918), which all demonstrated such a single shape in tilted or rotating movement.

18 For example, in another painting from 1962, *Red White*, a single irregular upturned *V* shape lies on a white ground, but all of the shape's eight sides are curved. It can be seen on the rear wall of his Coenties Slip studio in a photograph [**fig. 7**]. But no sooner does one notice a family resemblance than many other possible connections seem equally (if not more) vivid — for instance the moving gait of *Red White* (1959) or the truncated shadows in *Sketchbook 23 – Drawings on a Bus* from even earlier (1954).

19 Ellsworth Kelly in conversation with the author, January 2015.

Plates

White Relief over Black, 2013
Oil on canvas, two joined panels
70⅛ × 45 × 2⅝ inches; 178 × 114 × 7 cm



Yellow with Black and White, 2013
Oil on canvas, three joined panels
80½ × 50 inches; 205 × 127 cm



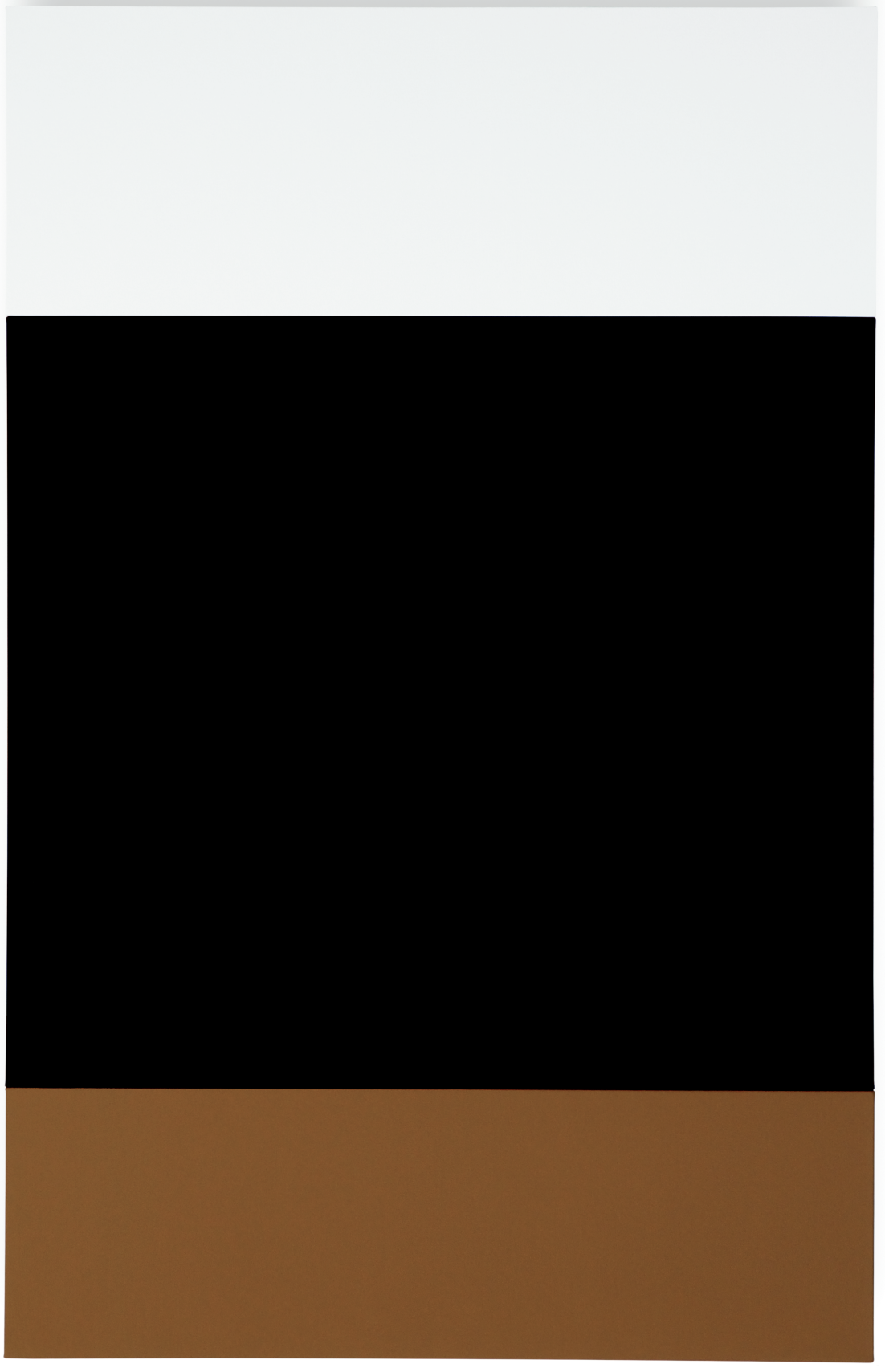
White Relief over Gray, 2013
Oil on canvas, two joined panels
60 × 65 × 2⅝ inches; 152 × 165 × 7 cm





Yellow Relief over Black, 2013
Oil on canvas, two joined panels
40⅛ × 130 × 2⅝ inches; 102 × 330 × 7 cm

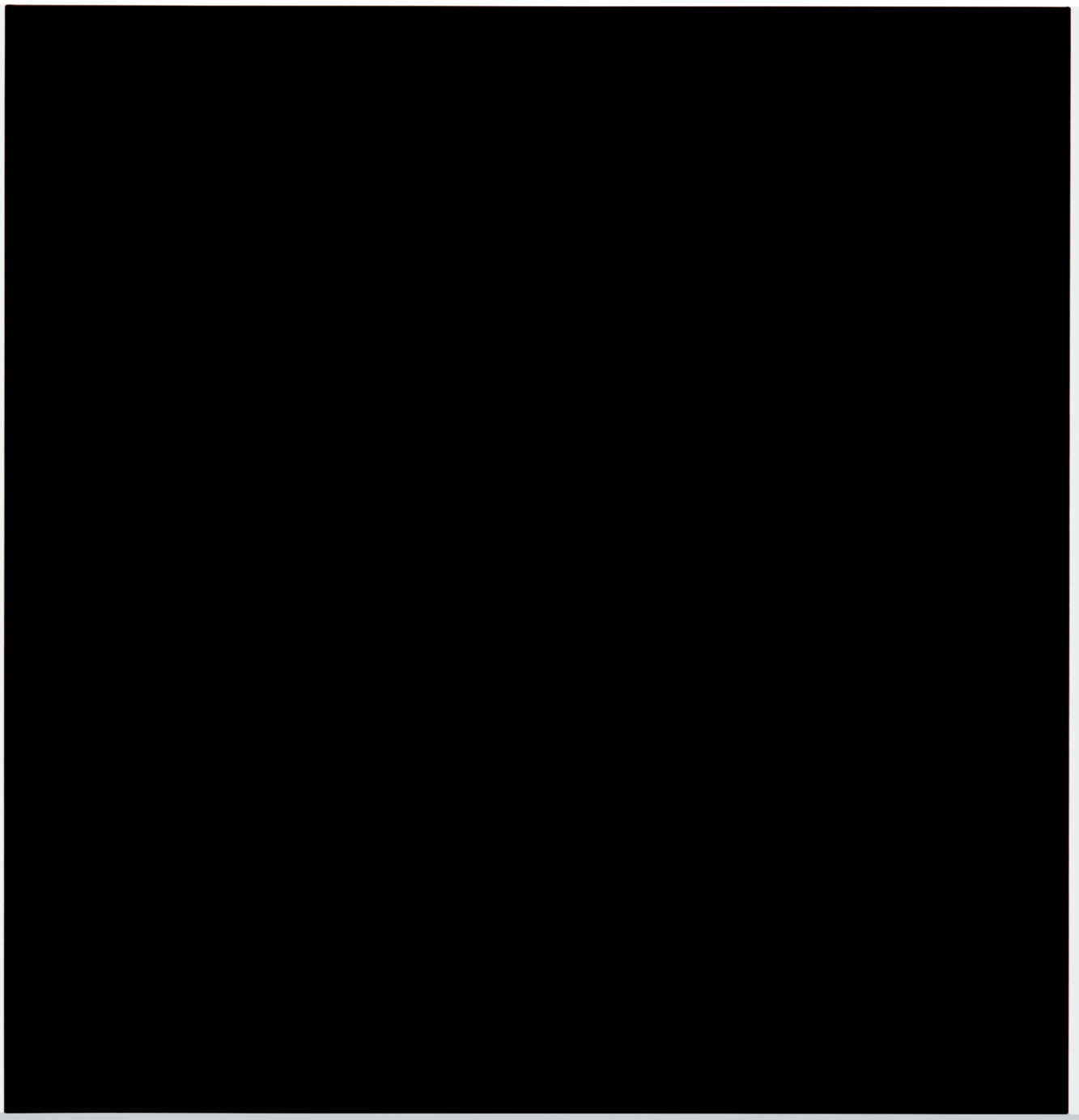
Brown Black White, 2013
Oil on canvas, three joined panels
70¼ × 45⅛ inches; 178 × 115 cm



Red Relief over White, 2013
Oil on canvas, two joined panels
65 × 50 × 2⅝ inches; 165 × 127 × 7 cm



Black with Two Whites, 2013
Oil on canvas, three joined panels
60⅛ × 69⅞ inches; 153 × 178 cm



Split Yellow, 2013
Oil on canvas
52 × 72 inches; 132 × 183 cm



White Curve in Relief over White (Belle-Île), 2013
Oil on canvas, two joined panels
47¼ × 84 × 2⅝ inches; 120 × 213 × 7 cm

Untitled, 2013
Painted stainless steel and aluminum
270 × 240 × 129 inches; 686 × 610 × 328 cm



Untitled, 2014
Painted aluminum
178¼ × 600 × 162¼ inches; 453 × 1524 × 412 cm



Black Relief over Yellow, 2014
Oil on canvas, two joined panels
70⅛ × 73¼ × 2⅝ inches; 178 × 186 × 7 cm



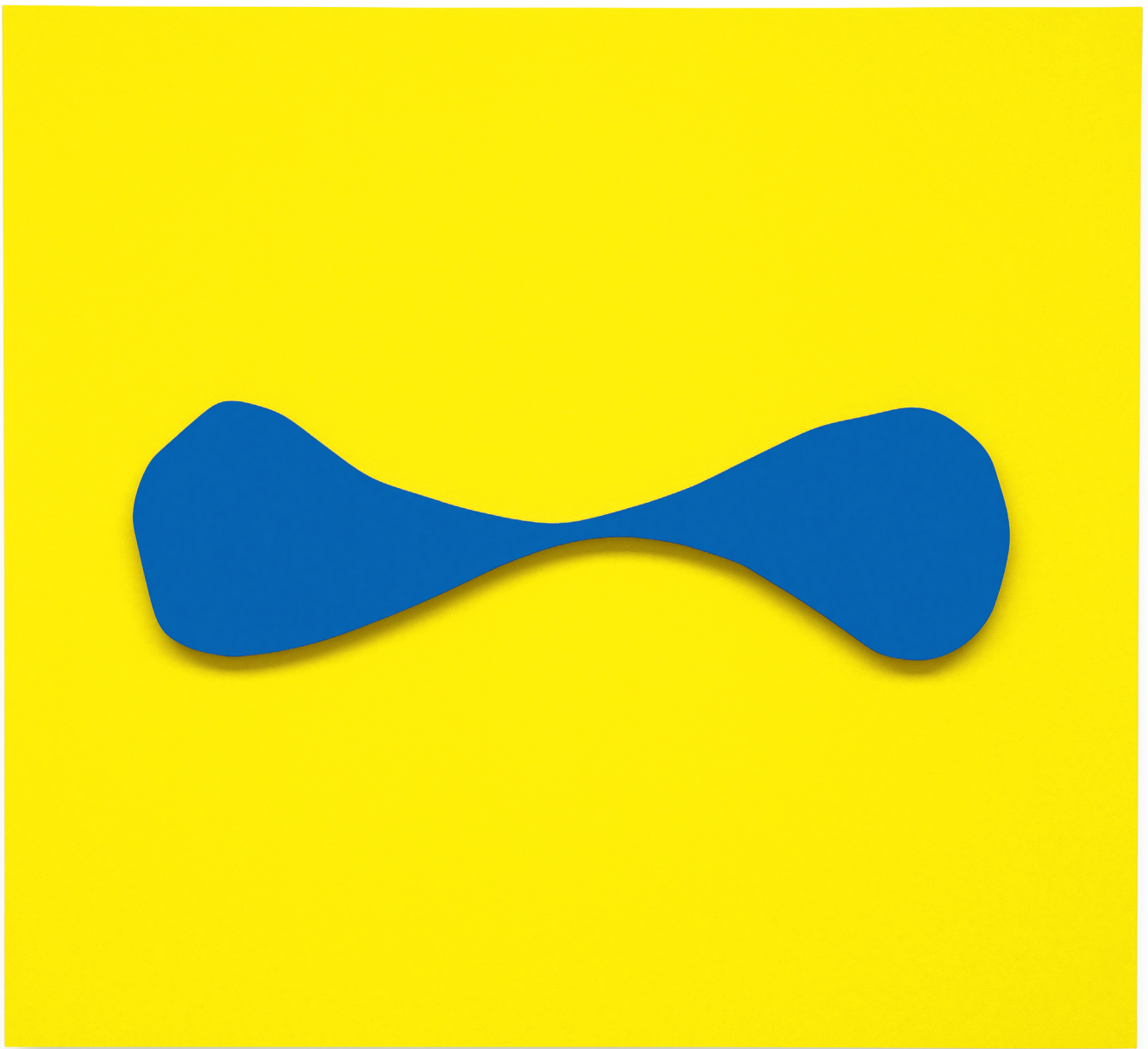
Red White, 2014
Oil on canvas, four joined panels
70¼ × 70 inches; 178 × 178 cm



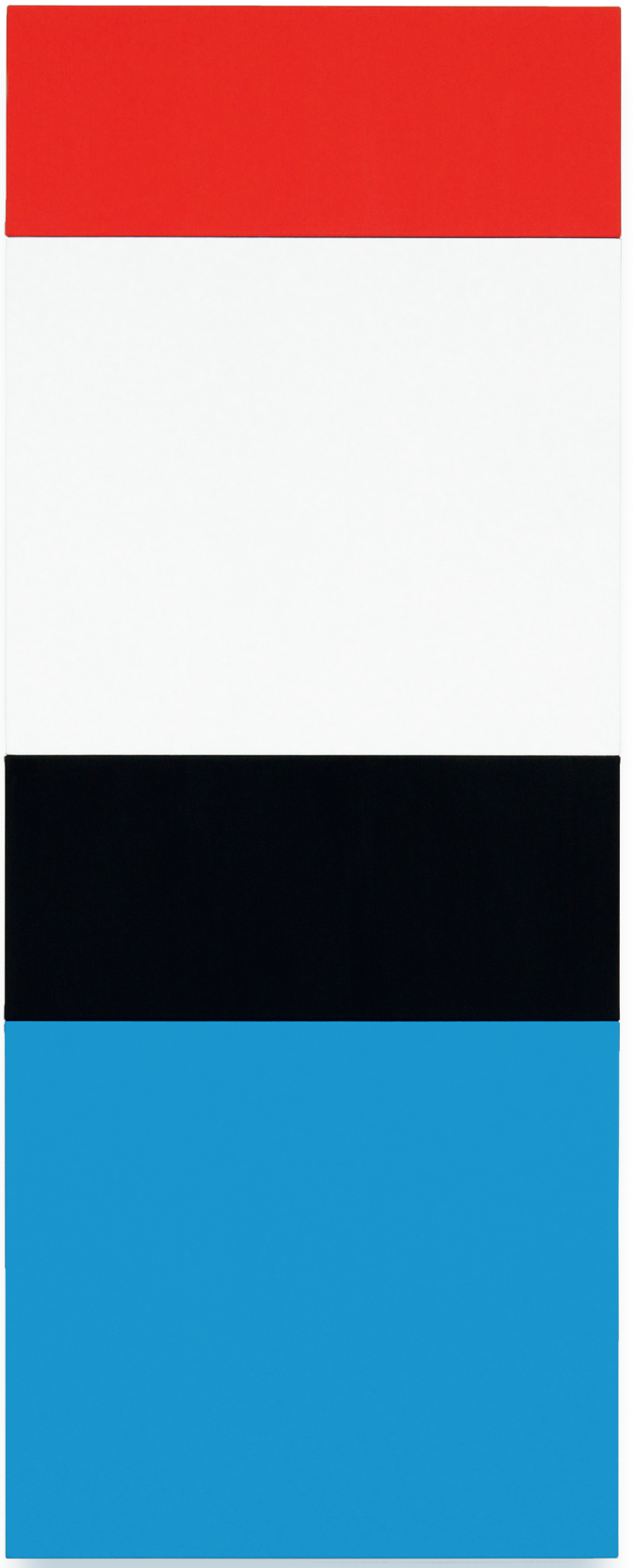
Blue with Two Whites, 2014
Oil on canvas, three joined panels
65¼ × 49¼ inches; 166 × 125 cm



Blue Relief over Yellow, 2014
Oil on canvas, two joined panels
60⅛ × 65½ × 2½ inches; 153 × 166 × 6 cm



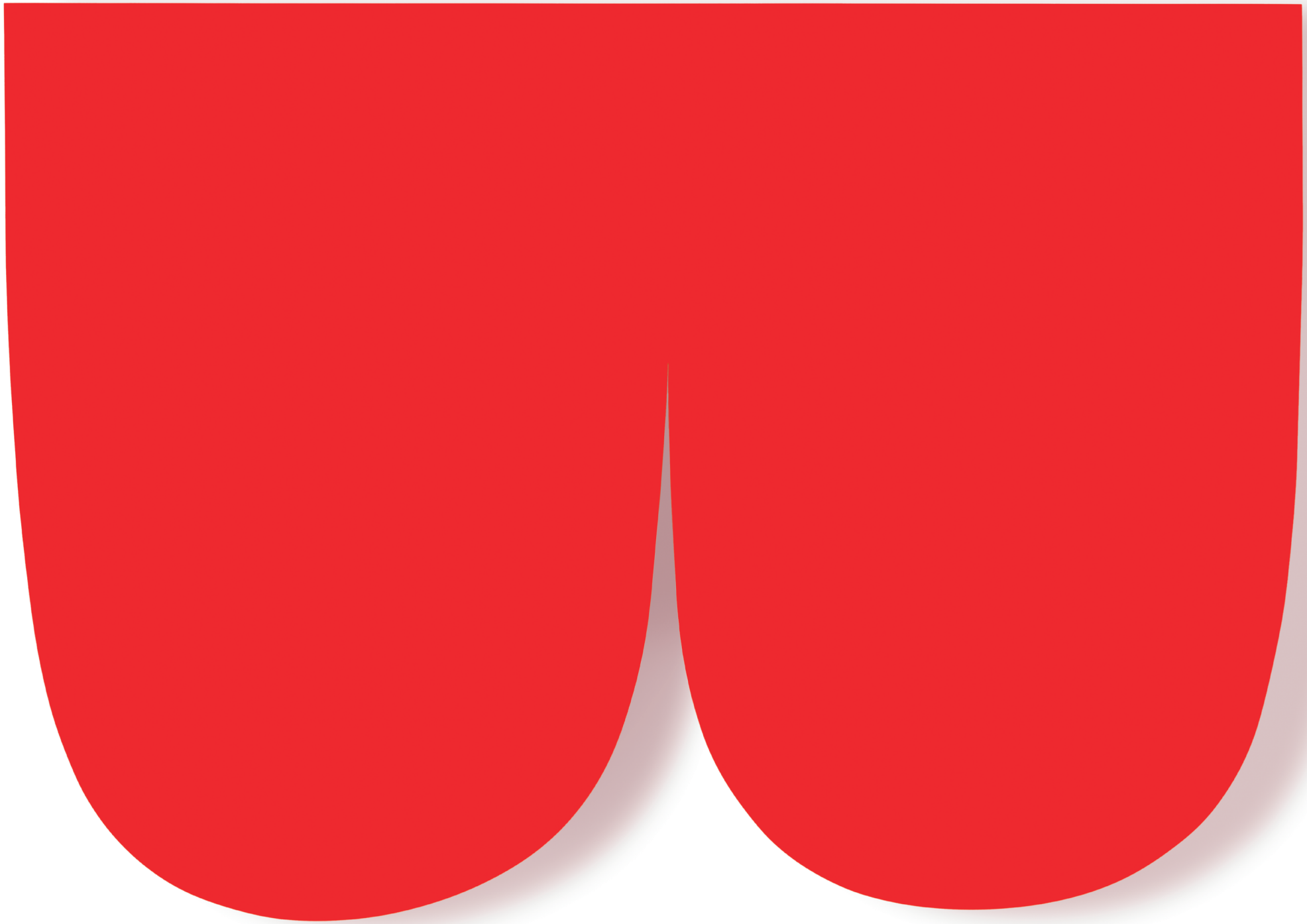
Red White Black Blue, 2014
Oil on canvas, four joined panels
69½ × 27½ inches; 177 × 70 cm



Blue Angle, 2014
Painted aluminum
90 × 150 × 4⅛ inches; 229 × 381 × 10 cm

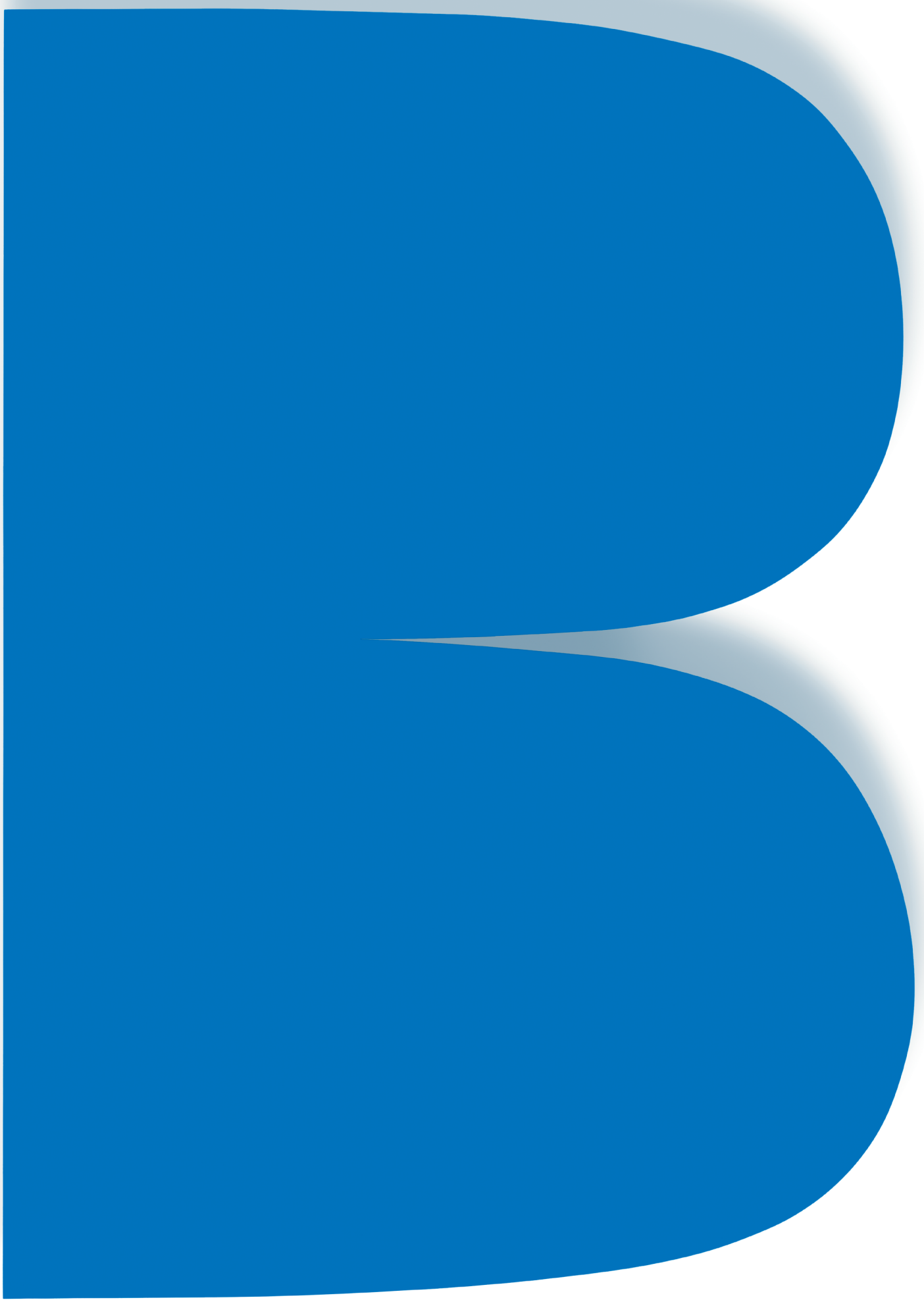


Red Curves, 2014
Painted aluminum
90 × 63½ × 4⅛ inches; 229 × 161 × 10 cm

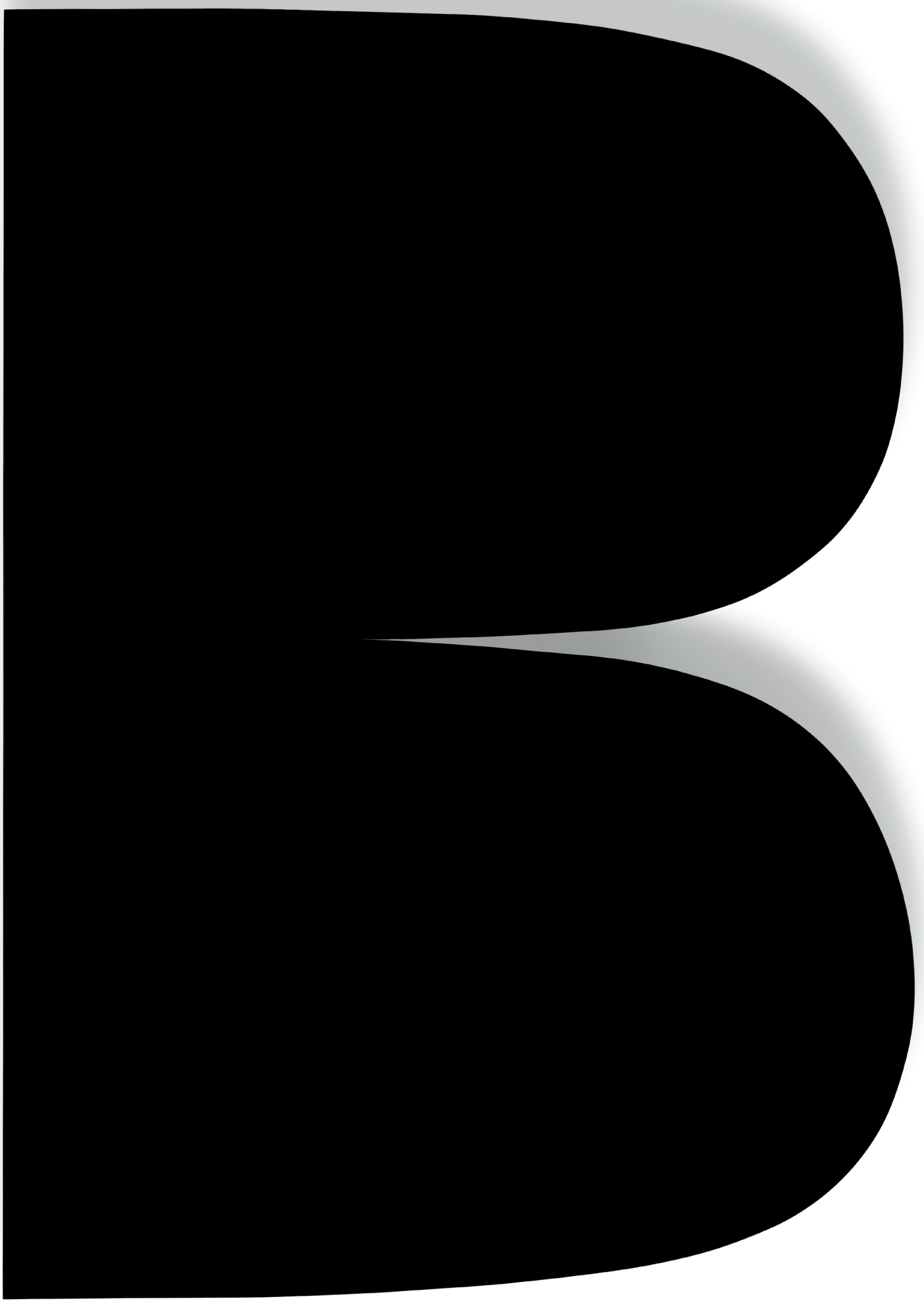


Yellow Curves, 2014
Painted aluminum
90 × 63½ × 4⅛ inches; 229 × 161 × 10 cm

Blue Curves, 2014
Painted aluminum
90 × 63½ × 4⅛ inches; 229 × 161 × 10 cm



Black Curves, 2014
Painted aluminum
90 × 63½ × 4⅛ inches; 229 × 161 × 10 cm



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